

# 2001 OVERVIEW

**By Roger Rostvet**  
*Game and Fish Deputy Director*  
**Photos by Harold UMBER**

In January we look forward to the start of a new year and exciting things to come. We also review accomplishments and unmet challenges to set the groundwork for the year's direction.

The Game and Fish Department is a cabinet level agency of state government with its director appointed by the governor. The new year ushered in a new governor, John Hoeven. With a new top administrator, state cabinet level posts came under review, including the position of Game and Fish Department director. Dean Hildebrand, appointed in 1996 by then-governor Edward Schafer, was reappointed by Governor Hoeven in July of 2001.

The state legislature also met in the early months of 2001 and responded to a variety of game and fish bills including the Department's budget. Currently the Department is in sound fiscal condition as revenues are higher than projections. The Department is a user-funded agency, receiving no general tax dollars. Its fiscal health and ability to carry out its mission is tied directly to license sales, federal aid dollars, nongame contributions, investments of surplus funds and other sources.

The Department strives to maintain a reserve equal to 25-50 percent of its biennial appropriation, with a legislatively mandated minimum \$10 million reserve. Currently, we are slightly in excess of the

50 percent goal; however, our 2001-2003 budget increase of 12.9 percent, for a total budget of \$34,719,641, exceeds projected revenues, which may draw down reserves slightly.

Sustaining a six-month to one-year reserve carries the challenge of protecting special funds from diversion. In the state budgeting process, any special fund agency with reserves is looked upon as a source of revenue for slightly related activities, and vigilance is necessary to guard against diversion of funds.

Some significant enhancements to our baseline budget are as follows:

• Two additional game warden positions	\$ 204,616
• Private land habitat program increases	\$ 425,000
• Coverlocks wildlife habitat program and one position	\$ 1,200,000
• GIS (Geographic Information System) position	\$ 82,310
• Aquatic habitat program with one position	\$ 946,868
• Storage building and fenced storage yard	\$ 275,000
• Noxious weed control increase over base level	\$ 50,000
• Wildlife Services increased support	\$ 300,000

Key game and fish related bills passed during 2001 legislative session:

**HB 1070** – Provides a lifetime resident combination hunting and fishing license for volunteer hunter education instructors who have taught classes for 30 years.

**HB 1269** – Mandated a legislative study of issues relating to resident and nonresident hunting in North Dakota.

**HB 1356** – Requires the governor to provide by proclamation a season for spearfishing through the ice from darkhouses.

**SB 2051** – Requires motorboat licensing applicants, in whose name the motorboat has not previously been licensed, to provide proof of payment of sales or use tax that was due upon acquisition, or provide evidence of exemption from sales or use tax.

**SB 2178** – Allows North Dakota to enter the interstate wildlife violator's compact. Violators who have their hunting or fishing privileges suspended in a compact state will have their privileges suspended in all compact states.

**SB 2449** – Prohibits all hunting guides/outfitters from operating on land owned in fee title by the Department or private land enrolled in the Department's Private Lands Open to Sportsmen program. This bill excluded lands leased by the Department from other government agencies such as the Bureau of Reclamation and Corps of Engineers.

The passage of HB 1269 marked an impasse on how to handle regulations relating to concerns brought about by increased numbers of nonresident waterfowl and pheasant hunters. This bill requires an interim study of this issue and a report back to the full legislature on its findings and recommendations.

Nonresident waterfowl license sales reached a record level of 25,165 in 2000. The number of nonresident pheasant hunters also peaked at about 14,525, as did the number of resident pheasant hunters at 52,651.

Change and tradition are inherently a statement of conflict. In North Dakota, hunting, fishing and trapping are steeped in tradition and the traditional way many

North Dakota residents hunt is being challenged. We are one of the last states where access to private land is not complicated by no-trespass laws, and that is part of the North Dakota hunting tradition. Free and easy access to private land by hunters unless the land is posted to trespass, is changing.

Many people state this change is inevitable, others contend it is nonresidents who are at fault for introducing North Dakota to fee hunting, leasing, the proliferation of guides and outfitters, and an increase in competition for a state wildlife resource held in common.

Whether change is good or bad can only be assessed on a personal level. Many sportsmen feel their quality of life is already diminished, or is threatened if the trend toward commercialization continues. Other residents feel the change is a breath of life for North Dakota's economically-strapped rural areas. This gap in common ground was evident in the past legislative session. The majority of wildlife-related bills centered on public access for residents or the level of nonresident participation.

This controversy is challenging because it is not based on the biology of the critters in question, waterfowl and pheasants. For big game and turkeys, both the legislature and the Department have focused on reserving these limited resources for the near-exclusive use of the state's residents. Waterfowl and pheasant management is different. Annually, habitat condition is more important than the previous year's harvest. The Department will continue to be active in this process and we encourage citizen participation in the workings of the Judiciary B interim committee.

## TECHNOLOGY

The Department continues to implement new technology to provide more efficient internal operation and enhanced customer convenience. Internet license sales started in 2000 and now customers can purchase and print their own licenses from home computers. Telephone licensing also remains popular, but this service may actually diminish in the future as people discover the ease and convenience of Internet licensing.

One of the most popular additions in 2001 was the convenience of applying for lottery licenses on the Internet. This service greatly improves application accuracy because individuals type in their own information, rather than Department staff re-entering printed information.

The addition of a GIS specialist and enhanced technology will keep use current within the scientific communities.

## PRIVATE LAND INITIATIVE

The Private Land Initiative is a Department program to enhance and conserve habitat on private land in North Dakota. PLI has three main goals:

- 1) Conservation of habitats for fish and wildlife populations.
- 2) Provide landowners interested in wildlife conservation with cost-share assistance for developing and protecting wildlife habitat, as well as protecting property from wildlife depredation.
- 3) Provide the public with opportunities to access fish and wildlife resources on private land. The primary focus of this goal is hunting access.

The PLI is funded with revenue from the sale of habitat stamps and from interest accrued from the Department's general

account balance. Three full-time employees located in Bismarck head up this initiative and administer its budget. District biologists and technicians in Department field offices work locally with landowners to deliver the program across the state.

PLI habitat programs include practices such as grass plantings, wildlife tree/shrub plantings, aspen management, habitat protection, wildlife water developments, nesting structures and cooperative projects. Agreements with landowners, which combine both habitat enhancements and public access, are referred to as Conservation PLOTS (Private Land Open To Sportsmen) agreements. These tracts of land are posted with Department PLOTS signs and are identified in the Department's annual Conservation PLOTS Guide.

### PLOTS Program Acres – Fall 2001

228 Habitat PLOTS	53,874 acres
314 CRP Cost-sharing PLOTS	82,428 acres
14 Food PLOTS	231 acres
27 Native Forest PLOTS	7,728 acres
26 Waterbank (W/NDGFD \$\$)	3,053 acres
4 CoverLocks	640 acres
4 EWP Cost-sharing PLOTS	568 acres

### Total Public Access Acres

Fall 2001 **148,522**

## YEAR 2001 EXPENDITURES

### PLI Expenditures for 2001

Provided additional cost-share to 13 landowners for 75 acres of wildlife trees on private lands \$ 9,217

Provided cost-share to 2 landowners to clear 30 acres of aspen for timber stand improvement \$ 783

Leased approximately 27,551 acres of private land for wildlife habitat \$ 366,183

Provided cost-share for CRP grass seeding on 7,999 acres for public access \$ 164,000

Leased approximately 5,818 acres of forest land for wildlife habitat \$ 52,985

Provided funds for establishment and rental of approximately 1,086 acres of food plots \$ 52,418

### Deer Depredation

Fencing, repellents, and other assistance provided to producers to alleviate or minimize deer depredation \$ 183,091

### Cooperative Agreements with Agencies And Groups

Provided funds to North Dakota Department of Agriculture for the State Waterbank Program (lease ac. with public access) \$ 30,200

Provided funds to various clubs/landowners for habitat and food bale projects \$ 8,175

Provided funds to county soil conservation district for equipment \$ 5,000

**TOTAL \$872,052**

## COVERLOCKS FOR CONSERVATION

In late 1999 Director Dean Hildebrand launched the Missions in Woodland Habitats special project to develop a program that would emphasize establishment of high quality habitat for the primary benefit of North Dakota resident wildlife. The program would also feature a public access component, including new and elevated financial incentives to private lands producers.

In January 2001, following 13 months of proposal writing and rewriting, then Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman and North Dakota Governor Ed Schafer signed a \$44 million cost-sharing agreement under USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. The

program is today known as CoverLocks for Conservation.

A CoverLock is a new label for a relatively old concept: to winter wildlife, put heavy woody cover, a food source and herbaceous loafing cover together in one place. Our agreement calls for approximately 20,000 acres (1,000 CoverLocks) of component habitat to be established over the next several years on 20-acre Coverlock tracts that include tree, grass-legume and food plot components. Aside from some preparation costs, the producer pays nothing for the approximately \$12,000 cost of habitat establishment. In addition, he gets CRP payments from USDA and an up-front easement payment from Game and Fish.

A CoverLock carries a 30-year use and

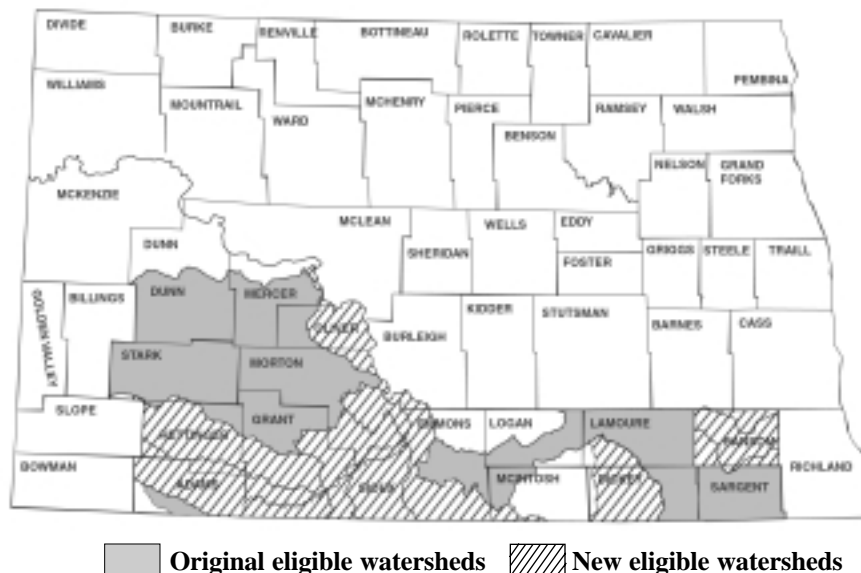
public access easement, including public access on the entire quarter section upon which the CoverLock is located. If 1,000 CoverLocks are placed, 160,000 acres of public access will be created.

Prior to proposal acceptance by USDA our Department had arranged, at our expense, for four pilot CoverLocks as demonstration areas. They were established this past May in Emmons County. Since then, nearly 60 producer applications have been reviewed, and by the end of May 2002 we anticipate 41 CoverLocks established, located in 10 of the 14 eligible counties.

Recently USDA approved an amendment to our agreement to include an additional seven watersheds for eligibility. All of Sioux County was added along with parts of Burleigh and Ransom. In addition, the existing eligible counties added new eligible watersheds. Some counties are now entirely eligible and others nearly so (see map of original watersheds and additions).

Partnerships are a new way of doing conservation business. While this implies a sharing of financial burdens, it also means new challenges in multi-agency coordination and cooperation. CREP/CoverLocks is a partnership that relies heavily on various entities executing their respective jobs in a timely and accurate manner. To deliver CREP/CoverLocks our Department, USDA's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service field and state offices, the North Dakota Attorney General's office, banks and abstract offices, tree nurseries, the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts, the hard work put in by local

## CREP/COVERLOCKS FOR CONSERVATION ELIGIBLE WATERSHEDS



soil conservation districts in getting trees planted, and above all North Dakota producer participants, must all work together. We are happy to report that this relationship, despite some expected growing pains, is strong and productive.

The Department's CoverLocks for Conservation staff currently includes, John Schulz (easements), Harry Iszler (promotions), and Ted Upgren (administration).

## **SAVE OUR LAKES**

The Department recently put in motion a new program, Save Our Lakes. The goal of this program is to develop projects and work with existing programs to enhance and restore aquatic habitat in order to protect North Dakota fishery resources for the benefit of all anglers.

Many of our lakes, rivers and streams are suffering the deleterious effects of aging. Although this aging process is natural for all bodies of water, it has been expedited by land use practices and pollution. The Game and Fish Department is looking at ways to stem and in some cases reverse this process through a variety of conservation measures.

For example, it is estimated that Sweetbriar Dam (Morton County) receives 60,000 to 90,000 tons of sedimentation annually. That is enough sediment, mostly nutrient-rich topsoil, to cover one acre of land 31 feet deep. This does not take into account the tons of fertilizers and pesticides applied to nearby cropland, of which large portions end up in the lake. At this rate of sedimentation, Sweetbriar Dam will be completely filled in less than 60 years.

Game and Fish staff and cooperators are working on identifying, assessing and mitigating point-source and nonpoint-source pollution in lakes, reservoirs and associated watersheds. This includes adherence to Environmental Protection Agency guidelines and standards for clean water.

The SOL program will concentrate on both in-lake and watershed activities. Various factors contributing to watershed erosion and sedimentation of reservoirs and lakes are being addressed with tools that include Best Management Practices, conservation easements, cooperative agreements and watershed modeling. The SOL program emphasizes projects that reduce nutrients in lakes through trapping and/or removal of sediments, in-lake noxious water evacuation, creation of buffer strips, and other standard and innovative conservation practices. Watershed projects also include noxious and invasive species prevention and control.

Through the SOL program, Game and Fish hopes to use a variety of tools, including creation of waste containment facilities, bank stabilization projects, sediment dredging and trapping. The SOL program will be able to cost-share many of these private lands projects as well as lend technical advice. It is the intent of Game and Fish to work cooperatively with local, state and federal agencies to identify funding sources and implement projects that meet the SOL goal.

Several lakes across the state have been identified by Game and Fish staff as priority waters based on criteria such as watershed condition, recreation use and opportunity for success. The program will focus on identified priority projects, but opportunities to immediately address and rectify

problems will be considered. Priority waters and associated watersheds for the 2001-2002 funding cycle include: Armourdale Dam, Towner County  
North Lemmon, Adams County  
Brewer Lake, Cass County  
McGregor Dam, Williams County  
Carbury Dam, Bottineau County  
McDowell Dam, Burleigh County  
Crown Butte Dam, Morton County  
Mooreton Pond, Richland County  
Dead Colt Creek, Ransom County  
Raleigh Reservoir, Grant County  
Dickinson Dike, Stark County  
Sather Dam, McKenzie County  
Lake LaMoure, LaMoure County  
Velva Sportsmans Pond, Ward County

## **UPLAND GAME BIRDS** **Sharp-tailed Grouse**

In the fall of 2000 hunters in North Dakota harvested just over 125,000 sharp-tailed grouse, up from 101,564 in 1999. There were 33,573 people in the field after sharptails and average harvest was 3.72 birds per hunter, both up slightly from 1999. The 2001 harvest should be similar.

## **Hungarian Partridge**

This popular game bird is slowly making a recovery from multiple weather-related disasters in the 1990s. Hard winters combined with cold and wet brood-rearing periods devastated the partridge populations in North Dakota. In the fall of 2000, hunters bagged nearly 51,000 partridge, up from just over 41,000 in 1999. Fall 2001 hunting success, at least at first observation, indicates that a slow recovery continues.

### **Ring-necked Pheasants**

Pheasant hunters harvested 283,759 roosters in 2000, an increase of nearly 10 percent over 1999. The rise in harvest coincided with a 13 percent increase in the number of people hunting pheasants, this includes both residents and nonresident hunters. Resident hunters increased from 47,609 to 52,651 and nonresident hunters increased from 11,857 to 14,525.

In 2001, bird numbers appeared to be similar to 2000 in most parts of the state, except the northwest which suffered the effects of an early and tough winter. Fall weather conditions across much of the pheasant range were exceptional, which should contribute to an overall increase in harvest.

### **Ruffed Grouse and Sage Grouse**

We are fortunate to have the unique opportunity to hunt both ruffed grouse and sage grouse. Not many other states can claim that distinction. Ruffed grouse and sage grouse remain species where the overall harvest is limited. Because of reduced spring populations, harvest for both species in 2001 will likely decrease from 2000.

### **WILD TURKEY**

Fall turkey hunting opportunities in North Dakota continue to expand and the number of people interested in participating is also increasing. Last year the Department eliminated the early and late seasons in favor of one long season that corresponded to the upland game season. The change was well received with almost 2,000 more applicants for licenses, an increase of 30 percent from 1999. Hunter

success in 2000 was 65 percent and both hunters and landowners responded positively to the season structure change. Since the season runs into early January, landowners who have turkey depredation problems had the chance to invite hunters in to harvest some birds and redistribute large flocks of turkeys away from farmsteads. Apparently this strategy worked well for both landowners and hunters.

In the fall of 2001 a record 6,510 fall turkey licenses were available. This is an increase of 510 from 2000. Three new units were opened and several others were expanded

### **WATERFOWL AND OTHER MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS Ducks**

Because of exceptional water conditions and additional acres of high-quality nesting habitat provided by the CRP in 2001, North Dakota recorded its highest contribution to the fall flight on record. Things were not as rosy in other parts of the continent as conditions in Canada have been dry and there is a continued decrease in both terrestrial and aquatic habitat there, as well as in much of the U.S.. This equated to plenty of locally raised ducks but not much of a northern flight.

This fall's duck hunt took many twists; a late October blizzard disrupted the hunt in the north central and northeastern portion of the state. High concentrations of hunters in mid-season were reported to have affected quality of hunting in localized areas. Some of the best hunting may have been in November, a time when most ducks are usually frozen out of all but the largest lakes and rivers.

### **GEESE Canada Geese**

Resident Canada geese continue to do extremely well. In order to address this situation the Department developed a statewide early September season in the fall of 2000, which included an expanded daily bag limit of five birds with 10 in possession. In 22 days hunters harvested more than 37,000 large Canada geese in North Dakota. The early September season was held again in 2001 and based on continued growth in the goose population and greater hunter participation we anticipate an even higher harvest. The regular season for Canada geese featured a three bird per day limit and six in possession, with some of the best hunting and bird concentrations occurring in November and into December.

### **Snow Geese**

About four years ago hunters began to notice a marked change in snow goose migration patterns. The geese began staying in the prairie provinces of Canada for a longer time in the fall and then overflying the state when they moved south. Abundant water, food, and lack of hunting pressure in southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan are suspected causes behind the adjustment in snow goose movement. This year's weather created massive snow goose concentrations rarely seen in the central and southern parts of the state during November.

## **OTHER MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS**

### **Sandhill Cranes**

Sandhill crane populations are stable to slightly increasing and this has allowed some expansion of hunting opportunities in the past few years. Cranes have been entering North Dakota later each fall so we have slowly adjusted the season back to coincide with the migration. These factors have contributed to continued interest in crane hunting. This fall, for the first time ever, the sandhill crane season was open east of Highway 281. The Department had been working for years to justify opening this area to hunting. Decades of collecting detailed harvest and technical information resulted in successful negotiations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to open the area.

## **BIG GAME**

### **White-tailed Deer and Mule Deer**

After several relatively mild winters and an increase in reproductive success, white-tailed deer and mule deer numbers have increased significantly. Whitetail populations are particularly strong along the Canadian border and in the eastern third of the state. In response, total deer license numbers jumped from 88,650 to 106,350 which is a 20 percent increase. This is a record number of licenses and is intended to reduce the deer population to unit management goals. In many units white-tailed deer are well above management goals and this year's aggressive increase in licenses is designed to adjust the population downward.

Mule deer have responded to milder winters and a significant reduction in doe

harvest over the past several years. The population in western North Dakota has recovered nicely and licenses were increased by 1,500. Weather conditions during the 2001 season were extremely mild, which should have contributed to a uniform geographic harvest.

### **Pronghorn**

North Dakota's pronghorn population is slowly recovering from the catastrophic winter of 1996-1997 when we lost 75 percent of our animals. We had high hopes for 2001 as a turning point. However, overall reproduction was significantly lower than anticipated throughout much of the state's pronghorn range. This was especially true in the northern badlands and Missouri Slope areas of western North Dakota. We don't know why reproduction was so low. Our big game biologists will work on this issue in the coming months and will monitor pronghorn harvest and next year's reproduction. As a result of the disappointing reproductive effort the number of licenses available for the gun season was reduced by 145, to 1,155, and no additional units were opened.

### **Moose, Elk, and Bighorn Sheep**

The big game trio of moose, elk, and bighorn sheep continue to generate tremendous interest among our state's hunters. With statewide elk and moose populations remaining stable, the number of licenses issued in 2001 – 195 for elk and 135 for moose – was nearly equal that of 2000.

Four licenses (three via the lottery and one auction) for bighorn sheep were issued in the northern badlands for 2001.

The northern population is stable and comprised of at least 135 sheep including 43 adult rams. No licenses were issued for the southern badlands because of a dramatic population decline resulting from a die off in 1998. The Department began the process of reestablishing a viable population in the southern badlands last winter when nine sheep were moved from southeast of Watford City to the Bullion Butte area.

## **FURBEARERS**

The ongoing mange outbreak has kept coyote and fox populations low, especially in the northern and eastern portions of the state. Water-related species are doing well, but as with fox and coyote, hunting and trapping activity remains as low as the price of furs.

## **FISHERIES OVERVIEW**

### **Missouri River System**

Paddlefish snagging harvest was similar to last year with the three-year average mandating an annual tag limit of one. Harvest once again was fairly high because of low runoff from Montana and most paddlefish congregating in the North Dakota portion of the Missouri-Yellowstone rivers. The continuation of above-average harvest is prompting consideration of more conservative management applications, which, if approved, will occur in the 2002-04 fishing proclamation.

Lake Sakakawea continued to produce an excellent walleye fishery in 2001. Walleye population levels remain high with numbers larger than 20 inches similar to past years. Water levels are again a concern, with low runoff in 2001.

The chinook salmon fishery started off well in 2001 but dropped off dramatically after Labor Day. Numbers were similar to 2000 but the average size increased. Collection of eggs went well with approximately 2.4 million eggs taken. Current plans are to once again stock 450,000 chinook salmon smolt into Lake Sakakawea in 2002. Much of this, however, depends upon water levels and the health of the smelt forage base.

Rainbow smelt, the major forage in Lake Sakakawea, are doing well. A hydroacoustic study designed to determine the number and biomass of smelt in the system has been ongoing for two

years. Numbers in 2001 were up, a good sign for Lake Sakakawea's fishery.

The northern pike fishery remains strong, and Sakakawea is one of the 27 water bodies across the state open to dark-house spearfishing. This experimental season will be monitored and evaluated to assess the impact on northern pike populations.

The Missouri River/Lake Oahe fishery is good for number of walleyes but size and growth continues to be only fair. Walleye growth is an ongoing concern, because of the lack of an adequate, long-term forage base.

Regulations implemented in 1999 in hopes of improving the fishery don't appear to be performing as expected and are being considered for removal. One of the best reproductive efforts of walleye on record occurred in 2001, which places even more pressure on the resurgence of a struggling forage base.

### **Devils Lake**

The fishery in Devils Lake was once again very good. Approximately 400,000 walleye were caught during the open-water season, and of those, 198,000 were harvested. Natural reproduction of walleye continues, as 2001 produced the sec-

ond best effort on record. Because of natural reproduction, the walleye fishery will likely continue to improve.

The daily creel limit for northern pike was increased to five on Devils

Lake in an effort to stimulate interest in its burgeoning pike population.

Preliminary results show a harvest of about 44,200 pike in 2001 compared to 38,275 in 1998. Fish per angler trip between the two time frames is similar.

Although the yellow perch population continues to thrive, fishing success has generally not done as well. Increasing lake size and adequate food supply are likely two factors contributing to this. Perch reproduction in 2001 was the second highest since the return of high water levels. This should help maintain a good population structure, and ensure good fishing in the future.

### **Small Lakes and Reservoirs**

Good water levels in most small lakes continued in 2001, especially in the southeastern portion of the state. These lakes will provide great fishing opportunities as long as the habitat is available. Some areas of the state experienced fish kills in 2001, primarily during the summer as a result of high temperatures in association with low dissolved oxygen levels.

The new Save Our Lakes program will direct much of its activity towards small lakes and reservoirs. Fifty-three lakes across the state were chosen for work,



with 13 high priority waters scheduled to receive attention in 2002. This program will ultimately provide and sustain good fishing in these areas.

Northern pike populations are doing well in most areas of the state in small lakes and reservoirs. Many areas are seeing reproduction from pike originally stocked when water levels increased in the mid-1990s. This is providing excellent opportunities for anglers interested in pike.

Opportunistic lakes, created by the current wet cycle, continue to provide recreational opportunity, primarily for pike and perch. With adequate water levels this should continue for a number of years.

### **Mid-Sized Reservoirs**

The fisheries of mid-sized reservoirs across the state are doing well, with few exceptions. One-half of the reservoirs either meet or exceed objectives for quality-size fish. While some have declined, they remain either above or close to the long-term average.

Water levels and water level control are critical factors in maintaining fish populations in mid-sized reservoirs. Habitat, and not harvest, appears to be a major factor determining whether fishing is good from year to year. Work continues with water management entities to put more emphasis on fish production for the benefit of the sport fishery.

### **Rivers and Streams**

North Dakota rivers and streams are underutilized. Yet they can provide great fishing during portions of the year. Access may be a major factor, but unfamiliarity is likely also a contributor.

Modification of dams on the Red River included Riverside Dam in Grand Forks and the North and South dams in Fargo. This is a good example of multi-agency cooperation with multiple benefits. Great progress has been made, with a more sustainable and better quality fishery the ultimate endpoint.

### **CONSERVATION SECTION**

The Department is active in formulating technical guidance to eliminate, reduce or mitigate habitat destruction associated with "development-related" activities. These projects include road construction, bridges, power lines, airports, flood control, drainage and a variety of others.

Department staff reviewed approximately 425 individual projects in 2001. Each project was reviewed for potential harmful impacts and recommendations were provided to offset or mitigate impacts where appropriate. In many instances the Department met with interested private parties and numerous local, state, and federal agencies in attempts to find common ground and alternatives.

Considerable effort has been extended on numerous issues associated with public land. We continue to work with the U.S. Forest Service on Forest Plan issues and habitat studies on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands. The Forest Plan is under a special review period. Once adopted, the plan sets the framework for grasslands management for the next 10-15 years.

A second public land issue is the creation of backcountry camping areas along Lake Sakakawea. The Department, in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has developed draft guidelines

for backcountry camping on Corps take areas adjacent to Lake Sakakawea. Once these rules are finalized, primitive camping in select areas around the lake will be allowed.

Issues relating to endangered species continue to require significant staff time. The principle issue during the past year related to the potential listing of the black-tailed prairie dog as a federally threatened species. Due to the interest in the status of this species, the Department has developed and finalized a management plan with the goal of maintaining a biological viable population of black-tailed prairie dogs in the state. A survey is being conducted to provide an updated estimate of current prairie dog distribution and acreage. We also intend to monitor population trends every three years. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently reevaluating the status of prairie dogs and is expected to render an opinion during the summer of 2002.

Water-related issues continue to generate interest in the state and in many instances affect fish and wildlife resources. These issues range from placing fill in small wetlands to transferring water between basins. Several groups have expressed concern over the potential impacts of bank stabilization on fish and wildlife resources. The Department is currently working with numerous stakeholders along the Garrison Reach of the Missouri River in an attempt to find common ground on issues related to bank stabilization. We are also participating in the Bureau of Reclamation study of water needs for the Red River basin. The Department is assisting the Bureau in identifying the potential aquatic habitat

needs of fish and wildlife resources associated with the Red and Sheyenne rivers. Once these needs are identified we are hopeful that practical alternatives can be developed.

## **COMMUNICATIONS SECTION**

### ***North Dakota OUTDOORS***

#### **Magazine**

*OUTDOORS* magazine celebrated its 70th year of publication in 2001. From its humble start as a six-page mimeographed sheet sent to a few hundred people, *OUTDOORS* today features color images and insightful writing that inform and entertain more than 60,000 readers each issue.

The outdoor world is saturated with specialty publications. The Game and Fish Department's magazine appeals to a varied audience of hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts, yet it has its own niche – photographs and words that emphasize the fun side of outdoor recreation, and timely, in-depth articles that explain issues, programs and events in which the agency is involved.

In the past year, among dozens of feature stories, *OUTDOORS'* pages introduced the CoverLocks for Conservation program, documented a bighorn sheep transplant, captured the excitement of late-winter ice-fishing, compared walleye fisheries in the state's two Missouri River reservoirs, chronicled battles against two types of noxious weeds, summarized 15 years of success for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and invited Governor John Hoeven to share some of his thoughts on the issues and opportunities associated with North Dakota's outdoors.

#### **“North Dakota Outdoors” Television News Program**

“North Dakota Outdoors” maintains its presence on 11 in-state television stations, with an estimated 50,000 viewers weekly. Program topics are designed to inform and entertain and range from wildlife research topics to unusual ways to enjoy the outdoors.

In addition to maintaining a weekly program, the video section produced instructional programs on cleaning northern pike and darkhouse spearfishing, and developed several public service announcements featuring safety messages for broadcast on most stations within North Dakota. Tom Jensen, former news director and anchor at KXMB-TV in Bismarck, assumed leadership of the Game and Fish Department's television and video projects early last year.

#### **News Release**

Each week Game and Fish issues a news release with information important to hunters, anglers, trappers, wildlife watchers and others. State, regional and national media consistently use this information in their publications and broadcasts.

#### **Phone and Walk-in Service**

More than 4,000 people per month call, email or personally visit the Game and Fish Department Bismarck office with requests for information or questions that require a response. Our information specialists consistently provide courteous, quality public service in a demanding work environment.

#### **Web Site**

The Game and Fish Department's web site generated more than 2 million visits in 2001, about double the amount of use in 2000. Special events or services, such as the spring snow goose migration, lottery license drawing results, and opportunity to purchase licenses online generate considerable traffic.

In 2001 the Game and Fish web site began featuring full issues of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* magazine, as well as in-site hosting of the Department's weekly television news feature. Look for more beneficial features added to the web site in the coming year.

#### **WOW Magazine**

In cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Game and Fish Department sends more than 10,000 copies of Wild Outdoor World magazine to North Dakota 4th graders five times during the school year. This program, now in its ninth year, remains popular with kids and teachers, as it provides fun and educational wildlife and conservation topics in a format designed for young readers. Each magazine features an inside front cover with North Dakota information; some issues carry a North Dakota feature article as well.

## **OUTREACH SECTION**

Education is the main focus of the outreach section. This section includes a hunter education coordinator, boat and water safety and Becoming an Outdoors-Woman coordinator, educational coordinator for Hooked on Fishing, Aquatics,

Project Wild and OWLS, a coordinator for watchable wildlife and outreach biologists located in Bismarck, Minot, Fargo and Grand Forks.

The goal of the section is to provide conservation and outdoor education and information to citizens of North Dakota.

The most recent addition to the outreach section includes four biologists placed in larger communities across the state. Doug Leier took over the Fargo area early in 2000. Early in 2001, Greg Gullickson was hired in Minot. During the summer of 2001, Jeb Williams took on the outreach mission as an additional duty to managing the Watchable Wildlife program from the Bismarck office. Most recently, Marty Egeland was hired to service Grand Forks.

These outreach biologists in urban areas are local Game and Fish contacts who promote Department-wide programs and materials, provide schools, media outlets, local wildlife clubs, civic organizations, volunteers, community leaders and others with a variety of Department services and materials, support wardens and local Game and Fish field staff, and finally provide public feedback to the Department, which will be used in making future decisions.

Overall, outreach staff greatly enhance many programs delivered by the Department including boat and water safety, and Hooked on Fishing and Aquatics. These biologists are on staff to complement every Department program. They are tasked with knowing something about every part of the Game and Fish since they are the “go to” Game and Fish people in their community.

### **Becoming an Outdoors-Woman**

The Game and Fish Department has completed its seventh year of offering the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program. The three-day workshop is held at Lake Metigoshe State Park in August and provides opportunities for 100 women to learn outdoor skills in a user-friendly environment. Classes offered include, shooting (shotgun and black powder), fishing (both basic and fly fishing), archery, canoeing, orienteering, backpacking and identification classes in wildlife, birds, and plants.

Our goal is to promote hunting and fishing as family activities, to encourage ethical behavior, and demonstrate the use of inexpensive and user-friendly equipment. Becoming an Outdoors-Woman is a wonderful opportunity to open doors to an exciting world of activities that enrich and enhance appreciation of the natural environment.

The 2002 workshop is August 16-18. The cost is \$120 per woman, which covers food, lodging and all necessary equipment. Contact Nancy Boldt at 701-328-6312 for more information or a registration form.

### **Boat and Water Safety**

More than 2,000 Boating Basics courses were distributed in 2001. While most of the courses were taken as a home-study activity, classes were also taught by boat and water safety volunteer instructors – 1,300 enthusiasts passed the course last year. The course is required for youngsters ages 12-15 who wish to operate a motorboat or personal watercraft and adults who wish to receive an insurance premium

discount. More than 1,300 children and adults participated in the Kids in Boats program, a joint effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Game and Fish Department.

Volunteers contributed 432 hours presenting 21 classes to people in need of boating and water safety education.

According to Nancy Boldt, boat and water safety coordinator, boating accidents decreased to 14 in 2001. This is 11 fewer than in 2000. One of the positive aspects was the increased awareness of wearing a life jacket.

### **Project WILD/Aquatics, Hooked on Fishing, and OWLS**

In 2001, the Department changed its fishing education program was changed from Project FISH to Hooked on Fishing in North Dakota. The goal of this new program is to promote and conduct fishing education programs on water safety, basic fishing knowledge, ethical behavior, and the wise use and appreciation of the state's fish and wildlife resources.

During 2001, 142 Hooked on Fishing events involved 470 volunteer instructors from clubs, sportsmen groups, schools, and a variety of youth groups throughout the state. These groups became mentors for kids and adults, providing fishing opportunities for 12,947 participants who wanted to learn how to fish.

Kids Fish Camp, sponsored by Lur'em for Life, a group of 50 volunteer fishing instructors, worked with 96 kids during the week-long camp at the Triangle YMCA Camp at Garrison. During the week these kids learned fish biology, water safety, boat safety, and fishing skills.

The Pathways to Fishing program provided a fishing and educational opportunity for 6,726 kids and parents during the nine days of the state fair in Minot.

A total of 47 Outdoor Wildlife Learning Sites are currently located at schools across the state. During the spring and summer 82 groups, involving 1,475 K-12 students, toured the Department's headquarters OWLS site and many fished in the OWLS pond. A part-time summer student conducted these tours. At 24 other OWLS locations in the state, 38 teachers worked with 616 students in 2001.

Project WILD and Aquatic education workshops were conducted during the year for 372 teachers across the state at 15 events. Teachers who attended these workshops learned to conduct WILD and Aquatic activities and use the whale, WILD box, and Aquatic box with students. Participants also received instruction in Hooked on Fishing, and writing an OWLS grant.

The state Envirothon was held at Lake Ashtabula where eight teams of high school students competed in outdoor science and environmental education competition.

During the school year, soil conservation districts sponsored 38 Eco-Ed camps for 3,056 kids. Students learned about the outdoors and environment with 440 teachers and instructors involved in the camps.

In all, Hooked on Fishing events, Project WILD workshops for teachers, and OWLS activities at schools totaled 221 events and 17,059 participants in 2001.

### **Watchable Wildlife**

The goal of the Watchable Wildlife program is to enhance public knowledge and appreciation of wildlife through Game and Fish sponsored activities involving bird identification, backyard bird feeding, wildlife viewing, outdoor photography, landscaping back yards for wildlife and numerous other activities.

In 2001, the program kept supporters informed with a quarterly newsletter sent to 4,000 wildlife enthusiasts. The annual winter bird survey continues to expand, involving 600 bird-feeding participants. The bluebird recovery program maintains approximately 300 participants.

The popular Watchable Wildlife photo contest features all wildlife species. Categories included are game, nongame, plants, and insects. The winner of the nongame category is featured on the Watchable Wildlife promotional poster. More than 50 individuals submitted photographs for the contest.

Programs aimed at youth remain a priority for both our Watchable Wildlife program and general Department staff. Recruiting young people to participate in outdoor activities is an increasingly challenging task. The Department held a public event in cooperation with the Bismarck Tribune Sports Show titled "A Wildlife Adventure Hunt." The introductory program included basic wildlife survival needs. The Adventure Hunt challenged youngsters to correctly identify different species of wildlife using habitat descriptions and appearance. The event proved successful, with more than 200 youngsters participating.

The Department spent approximately \$4,000 on small grants providing funds to

schools, Scout groups, and other organizations looking to construct wildlife nesting structures.

The Watchable Wildlife program provides educational posters and other publications to further promote habitat value and appreciation for all wildlife species. In 2001, Watchable Wildlife produced a series of three bird posters – wetland, grassland, and woodland birds of North Dakota – all available free of charge.

### **Hunter Education**

The Game and Fish Department began offering optional hunter education courses in the early 1970s. The course became mandatory in 1979 for all hunters born after December 31, 1961. Since that time, volunteer instructors have certified more than 146,000 students.

New instructors are always welcome and encouraged to contact our Department if interested at 701-328-6312. The course consists of at least 14 hours of classroom instruction which covers hunter ethics, firearm history, rifles, shotguns, handguns, ammunition, gun handling, wildlife management, survival and marksmanship. Students must be at least 10 years old to register.

In 2001, more than 600 instructors in 200 cities certified 6,000 students. The program also invested in 70 sets of dedicated training aids for volunteers, including rifles and shotguns. Similar money will be available in 2002 and used to improve and develop shooting ranges across the state. Finally, the program was rewarded by the legislature, which passed a bill providing free non-lottery sportsmen's licenses to volunteers with 30 years of service.

# LICENSES AND PERMITS ISSUED 2000

	Resident	Nonresident		Resident	Nonresident
Fishing	52,362	6,453	Deer Bow Hunting	11,385	1,002
Husband/Wife Fishing	21,804	1,726	Deer Bow Hunting (Gratis)	48	
Senior Citizen Fishing	13,111		Antelope Gun Hunting	933	
Disabled Fishing	522		Antelope Gun Hunting (Gratis)	368	
Short Term Fishing			Antelope Bow Hunting	885	60
7-Day		7,606	Moose Hunting	114	
3-Day		17,802	Moose Hunting		
Paddlefish Tags	4,964	1,199	(Preferential Landowner)	18	
Commercial Fishing	22		Elk Hunting	165	
Retail Bait Vendor	282		Elk Hunting		
Wholesale Bait Vendor	39	7	(Preferential Landowner)	39	
Fish Hatchery	5		Bighorn Sheep	4	
2000 Boat Registrations (renewal year)			Turkey Hunting (Spring)	2,287	
Boat Rentals	31		Turkey Hunting (Fall)	5,781	
General Hunting	65,973	35,348	Turkey Hunting (Gratis Spring)	247	
Small Game Hunting	34,443	34,401	Turkey Hunting (Gratis Fall)	300	
Sportsmen's License	30,510		Habitat Stamp	101,321	
Waterfowl Hunting		25,165	Shooting Preserve (1996-1997)	22	
Furbearer Hunting/Trapping	16,706	1,050	Hunting/Fishing Guide	319	
Fur Buyer (1999-2000)	41		Taxidermist	115	
Nongame Hunting		449	Falconry	1	4
Deer Gun Hunting	81,220	1,005	Scientific Collector	47	
Deer Gun Hunting (Gratis)	10,441	66			

## SUMMARY OF VIOLATIONS July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001

### Big Game (Gun)

Hunt without a license	22
No general game license and habitat stamp	5
Using another's license	2
Failure to carry license on person	6
Failure to sign or affix stamp	1
Shining (using artificial light)	4
Illegal possession/taking	26
Unlawful transportation	1
Aiding in concealment of unlawful game	6
Exceeding limit	5
Hunting in closed season	1
Hunting in wrong unit or closed area	6
Failure to tag game	36
Kill wrong species or sex	12
Use motor vehicle off established trail	34
Harass game with motor vehicle	2
Hunt on posted land without permission	30
Hunt before/after legal hours	6
Fail to accompany/transport other's game	3
Fail to wear fluorescent orange	8
Gratis hunter – hunting off described land	4
Other big game (gun) violations	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>229</b>

### Big Game (Bow)

Hunting without a license	1
No general game license and habitat stamp	2
Shining (using artificial light)	2
Hunting in closed area	1
Failure to tag	1
Using motor vehicle off trail	1
Hunt on posted land without permission	1
Hunt before/after legal hours	1
Fail to accompany/transport other's game	1
Other big game (bow) violations	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>

### Upland Game

Hunt without small game license	6
Failure to carry license on person	5
Use shotgun capable of holding more than 3 shells	21
Illegal possession/taking	7
Exceeding limit	4
Hunting in closed season	3
Hunting in closed area	13
Failure to leave identification of sex on game	13
Killing wrong species or sex	3
Use motor vehicle off established trail	33
Hunt on posted land without permission	11
Other upland game violations	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>118</b>

### Migratory Birds

Hunt without small game/nonresident license	5
Using another's license	1
Failure to carry license on person	8
Fail to sign or affix stamp	16
Use shotgun capable of holding more than 3 shells	19
Illegal possession/taking	2
Unlawful transportation	1
Exceed limits	15
Hunting in closed season	11
Hunting in closed area or zone	2
Failure to leave identification of sex on game	18
Kill wrong species or sex	2
Wanton waste	3
Hunt on posted land without permission	9
Hunt before/after legal hours	16
Nontoxic shot violations	22
Hunt without federal waterfowl stamp	8
Other migratory bird violations	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>174</b>

## 2001 LICENSES AVAILABLE

Moose .....	135
Elk .....	195
Bighorn .....	4

## APPLICATIONS RECEIVED 2001

Moose .....	12,666
Elk .....	11,958
Bighorn .....	7,705

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001

Income .....	\$ 17,127,173.34
Expenditures .....	\$ 16,221,878.87

### FUND BALANCES, FIXED ASSETS & LONG TERM DEBT

Game and Fish General Fund .....	\$ 19,032,021.67
Habitat and Depredation Fund .....	3,157,236.69
Nongame Wildlife Fund .....	214,340.37
TOTAL ALL FUNDS .....	\$ 22,403,598.73
FIXED ASSETS .....	\$ 23,459,061.00

DEPARTMENT NET WORTH .....\$ 45,862,659.73

*This statement is unaudited at the time of publication*

### Furbearer

Hunt/trap without a license .....	6
Using another's license .....	1
Fail to carry license on person .....	1
Shining/illegal use of lights for raccoon .....	1
Unlawful transportation .....	1
Use motor vehicle off established trail during deer season ..	1
Harass furbearers with motor vehicle .....	4
Other furbearer violations .....	1
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>16</b>

### Fishing

Fishing without a license .....	145
Fish house left on ice without identification .....	5
Failure to carry license on person .....	44
Failure to sign or affix stamp .....	1
Use more than legal number of hooks per pole/line .....	2
Illegal possession .....	1
Illegal method of taking fish .....	9
Aid in unlawful concealment of game .....	1
Exceeding limit .....	43
Fishing in closed season .....	1
Fishing in closed area .....	1
Taking undersized/oversized fish .....	7
Possess or use illegal trap, seine, net, or set line .....	1
Fail to remove fish house .....	5
Deposit fish/fish parts on ice or shore .....	5
Fish with or possession of illegal bait .....	5
Failure to attend lines .....	16
Fish with excessive lines .....	29
Sell fish/bait without a license .....	1
Paddlefish, pallid sturgeon violations .....	8
Other fish, frog, turtle, clam violations .....	15
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>345</b>

### Boating

Use unlicensed/unnumbered boat .....	63
Unlicensed boat rental .....	2
Operating without lights at night .....	16
Inadequate number of personal flotation devices .....	123
Fail to have observer while towing skier .....	74
Operate boat under influence/when intoxicated .....	6
Reckless/negligent operation .....	27
Other prohibited/hazardous operations .....	55
Other boating violations .....	15
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>381</b>

### Miscellaneous

Shining wildlife .....	7
Cartridge in chamber (loaded firearm) in vehicle .....	84
Fleeing .....	2
440 yard violation .....	33
Kill or possess harmless birds .....	1
Juvenile afield with a firearm .....	1
Wildlife management area/game refuge violation .....	9
Hunt in unharvested field .....	6
Deface/remove official signs .....	1
Minor in possession of alcohol .....	36
Possession of controlled substance .....	10
Possession of drug paraphernalia .....	8
No nongame license .....	1
No guide/outfitter license .....	3
No propagation permit .....	2
Misrepresentation on license application .....	64
Purchase hunting license without hunter safety course .....	2
Hunt, fish, trap while privileges suspended .....	1
Fail to appear on citation .....	2
Littering public use areas/waters .....	39
Shooting preserve violations .....	1
Other ND Game and Fish violations .....	19
Non-ND Game and Fish violations .....	29
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>361</b>

**TOTAL CITATIONS STATEWIDE .....1,637**